

THE AMERICAN VETERAN – EPISODE THREE, PART FOUR

JIM BENSON: THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS RELIES ON VOLUNTEERS OF ALL AGES FOR HELP IN HOSPITALS AND NURSING HOMES.

LAST YEAR ALONE, VOLUNTEERS SAVED VA 223 MILLION DOLLARS IN POTENTIAL PAYROLL COSTS.

DANIELLE MCDAVIT PROFILES A TRULY DEDICATED VOLUNTEER AT THE HINES VA HOSPITAL NEAR CHICAGO.

MCDAVIT: JENNIFER KELLY, A HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR, HAS A HEART OF GOLD, AND A FULL SCHEDULE.

CINDY KELLY, JEBBIFER'S MOTHER: TOMORROW WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

JENNIFER KELLY: I'M GOING VOLUNTEERING WITH GRANDPA.

MCDAVIT: SHE'S BUSY STUDYING.

JENNIFER: I'M IN THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM.

MCDAVIT: BUSY READING.

JENNIFER: I LIKE A LOT OF FACTUAL BOOKS.

MCDAVIT: BUSY PLAYING BASS GUITAR IN A BAND.

JENNIFER: I LOVE MUSIC.

MCDAVIT: STILL, JENNIFER MANAGES TO FIND TIME TO VOLUNTEER AT THE VA HOSPITAL IN HINES, ILLINOIS.

FOR JENNIFER KELLY, VOLUNTEERING IS A FAMILY AFFAIR. HER GRANDPARENTS AND TWO SISTERS ALSO PUT IN TIME AT HINES VA.

IT ALL STARTED ABOUT 10 YEARS AGO WHEN JENNIFER'S GRANDFATHER, CHESTER OLSZEWSKI, SIGNED UP TO HELP.

OLSZEWSKI, TALKING TO VETERAN: LET ME SEE IF YOUR HAIR IS CURLY? MY GOD YOU GOT ALMOST AS MUCH AS I DO!

I WAS A PATIENT HERE AT ONE PARTICULAR TIME AND I WAS VISITED BY A FEW OF THE VOLUNTEERS. AND I JUST THOUGHT I'D TRY IT FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

SOON HIS WIFE JOINED HIM. A FEW YEARS LATER, JENNIFER HOPPED ON THE WELCOME WAGON.

LATER, JEN'S YOUNGER SISTERS, LAURA AND KATIE, BECAME VA VOLUNTEERS, ALL THREE GIRLS, INSPIRED BY THEIR GRANDFATHER, A VETERAN, AND IN THEIR EYES, A HERO.

SEVEN YEARS LATER, JENNIFER IS STILL AN ACTIVE VOLUNTEER HAVING LOGGED MORE THAN A THOUSAND HOURS OF SERVICE.

JENNIFER: MY GRANDFATHER IS PROBABLY ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN MY LIFE.

OLSZEWSKI: THE WHOLE IDEA OF COMING TO HINES IS SERVING THE VETERAN.

CINDY: IT'S SOMETHING HE REALLY BELIEVES IN. TEACHING CHILDREN TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY WITH THE VETERANS, YOU KNOW GETTING THEM INTERESTED IN WHAT THE VETERANS DID FOR OUR COUNTRY IS DEFINITELY A GOOD LESSON IN LIFE.

MCDAVIT: IT'S A LESSON JENNIFER TAKES TO CLASS.

JENNIFER: THESE PEOPLE ARE PART OF OUR HISTORY AND I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT FOR US TO GET TO KNOW THEM AS PEOPLE AND KNOW WHAT THEY HAVE GIVEN TO US.

BARBARA MEZYK, SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER: TO A HISTORY TEACHER THAT'S MUSIC TO MY EARS THAT SHE VOLUNTEERED AT HINES HOSPITAL.

MCDAVIT: TRINITY HIGH SCHOOL IS MIGHTY PROUD OF JENNIFER, ESPECIALLY SINCE THEY FOUND OUT SHE'S RECEIVING A 15 THOUSAND DOLLAR SCHOLARSHIP FOR HER VOLUNTEERING EFFORTS.

BONNIE GUNTER, HINES VAMC VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR: SHE DESERVES THE SCHOLARSHIP BECAUSE SHE'S WORKED VERY HARD.

MCDAVIT: BONNIE GUNTER IS THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR AT HINES VA. SHE NOMINATED JENNIFER FOR THE AWARD.

GUNTER: JEN IS PROBABLY ONE OF THE NEATEST YOUNG LADIES THAT I HAVE MET IN MY ENTIRE CAREER. SHE'S VERY ENERGETIC, SHE'S VERY MOTIVATED; SHE'S VERY CARING.

MCDAVIT: AND SHE'S SMART, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE, FINDING A MENTOR IN THE FIELD SHE HOPES TO GO INTO, FORENSIC SCIENCE.

CATHERINE O'BRIEN, RN, FORENSIC NURSE: I'VE KNOWN JENNIFER FOR ABOUT 6 YEARS NOW AND I'VE SEEN HER REALLY BLOSSOM AND MATURE INTO A WONDERFUL YOUNG LADY. OUR PATHS HAVE CROSSED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE THAT MY INTEREST IN FORENSIC NURSING AND HER INTEREST IN SCIENCE HAS MADE US SHARE SOME REALLY GREAT CONVERSATIONS AS SHE'S PLANNING HER CAREER.

MCDAVIT: AS JEN DECIDES ON A COLLEGE TO PURSUE HER DREAM, SHE KNOWS SHE CAN COUNT ON THE JAMES H. PARKE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FOR VA'S YOUTH VOLUNTEERS.

JENNIFER: I'M HOPING THROUGH THE MONEY THAT I RECEIVED FROM THE SCHOLARSHIP, IT WILL HELP ME FURTHER MY EDUCATION SO THAT I CAN HELP PEOPLE MORE IN THE FUTURE.

MCDAVIT: FOR NOW, JEN WILL CONTINUE TO VOLUNTEER. HER STORY, AN INSPIRATION, A CALLING FOR DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS TO JOIN THE RANKS AT VA.

BENSON: THE JAMES H. PARKE MEMORIAL YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1976 IN HONOR OF VA'S FIRST VOLUNTARY SERVICE DIRECTOR. SCHOLARSHIP CANDIDATES MAY BE NOMINATED BY EACH VA MEDICAL CENTER.

WE AT THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HONOR THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED OUR COUNTRY SO WELL. IT IS OUR COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE THE BEST SERVICE TO AMERICA'S VETERANS EVERY DAY AND IN EVERY WAY.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTACT US ABOUT THE STORIES ON THIS PROGRAM, OR FOR ANY OTHER REASON, HERE ARE A FEW WAYS TO DO SO.

BY PHONE AT 1-800-827-1000; ON THE INTERNET AT [HTTP://WWW.VA.GOV](http://www.va.gov) OR IN PERSON BY VISITING YOUR NEAREST VET CENTER.

AND THAT'S ALL WE HAVE FOR THIS EDITION OF THE AMERICAN VETERAN. THANK YOU FOR JOINING US. WE'LL BE BACK NEXT MONTH WITH MORE REPORTS DESIGNED JUST FOR YOU, THE AMERICAN VETERAN.

FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, I'M JIM BENSON. SEE

YOU NEXT TIME.

END OF TRANSCRIPT